

NRCS Local Work Group Meeting Minutes
The Saddle Restaurant & Lounge
January 26, 2016, 7:30 am

Attendees: Andrea Mann, NRCS; Terry Johnson, NRCS; Tom Straughan, SWCD; Tom Demianew, SWCD; Ralph Perkins, Walla Walla Watershed Council; Vern Rodighiero, Blue Mountain Hort Society, Gordy Schumacher, CTUIR, Teddy Orr, Co. Weed Supervisor; Larry Coppock, landowner; Kyle Waggoner, SWCD; Richie Gardner, CTUIR; Rick Christian, CTUIR; Terry Reynolds, USFS; Jim Webster, GeoEngineers; Tonya Dombrowski, DEQ; Jon Staldine, UBWC; Judit Barroso, CBARC-OSU; Heath Hoeft, NRCS; Carrie Spradlin, USFS; Hans Rudolf, ODF; Craig Phillips, Energy Trust Oregon; Jeff Lorton, Duke Joseph Agency; Chris Hamilton, NRCS; Smita Mehta, DEQ; Terry Warhohl, Marion Jack Irrigation District

Facilitated by: Tom Demianew, SWCD.

Purpose: To provide a forum to bring together individuals with a variety of expertise and knowledge allowing NRCS and others to build on our collective successes while focusing our efforts to make the greatest impact with our available staff and funding.

Objective: Identify partners for the 2017 Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS).

January 27, 2015 Local Work Group Meeting Review:

Resource concerns identified in the January 27, 2015 meeting were:

Irrigated Agriculture

- Upper Watershed Storage for slow season long release
- Water Quality

Forestry:

- Forest Health - Weeds/Fire/Insect/Disease/Productivity

Range:

- Range Plant Health and Vigor - Invasive species/Productivity/Recreation

Dry Cropland:

- Organic Matter management - Herbicide Resistance
- Greenhouse Gas - Burn and Plow Systems
- Direct Seed declining soil ph

Initiatives available in 2016 are:

- Organic Initiative
- High Tunnel Initiative
- Energy Initiative

FY 2016 funding decisions implemented based on input from the January 2015 meeting and EQIP budget were:

- Hudson Bay Irrigation District All Lines Irrigation Improvements
- Forestry fuel reduction – Meacham area
- CTUIR Indian Lakes Forest and Range Health Restoration in year 3 of 4 with 2017 the last signup. (added by Terry)

Small groups who have or may meet during the year include:

- Forestry
- Biochar
- Cover Crops/Soil Health
- Drone Technology

The attendees broke into small groups according to land use. After the breakout each group presented their discussion information. A summary of each follows:

Irrigation/Watershed Planning/Energy

Resource Concerns

- Soil Moisture Monitoring
- Aquifer recharge in lower basin during winter and early spring
- Scientific Irrigation Scheduling Incentives from Energy Trust
- Irrigation districts need to secure winter recharge water
- Water quality degradation with decreasing water flows
- Dillon Dam \$200 K needed for removing dam and installing pipe
- Work on habitat needs as well as irrigation needs when developing projects
- Update delivery systems to more efficient systems
- LiDAR flight data Feb/Mar to complete entire Umatilla River
- Reduce Political, Legal, bureaucratic impediments to conservation implementation
- Track Nutrient Leaching
- Collaborative Effort to use Lower Umatilla Basin Funding for water supply
- Birch Creek Water Quality Improvement
- Sedimentation in Helix/Greasewood watershed. ID sediment origins.
- Understand sediment routing.
- Promote and develop healthy riparian areas and connections to flood plain in relation to fish and wildlife habitat.
- Water Quality evaluation needed above and below fish hatchery on Walla Walla River
- Climate Change effects to crops, etc. Meacham flows and temp changes predicted.

Solutions

- Flow Gauge costs, \$13 K, \$16 K, \$255 for a level logger is more effective.
- Evaluate Cause & Effect of Piping and Reservoirs
- Drone Technology uses for LiDAR – Scouting, monitoring, climate change, inventories
- Grande Ronde Model Watershed use of Drones
- Determine if amount of flow is related to stream channel straightening.
- Evaluate how piping irrigation ditches effects area hydrology
- WWBWC well monitoring – water levels measured
- WWBWC strategic planning to determine recharge needs
- Off Channel strategic planning – Meacham area recharge related to water temperatures and relationships to floodplain. Eg: Beaver dam effect to hydrology & riparian habitat improvements.
- Mimic Natural Storage and Release.
- Upper and Lower Watershed Storage Reservoirs for extended season long release fire suppression
- Evaluate piping of irrigation water effects to private and irrigation wells
- Lower Umatilla River priority assessment
- Smarter upper watershed water storage. Fill groundwater and ponds in winter.

Forestry

Resource Concerns

- Forest Production-wildlife/livestock
- Roads and Water Quality – need to tie maintenance/fish improvement/water quality
- Determine how partners can maintain roads and water quality
- Determine how to create accountability
- Density Reduction – Blue Mtn. Resiliency
- Wildlife Habitat
- Skid trail/Landing – native seeding/Walla Walla Grain Growers have high elev. Mix
- Forest Slash uses including Biochar (added by Andrea)

Solutions

- Roads/Water/Fish – Partner on Public forums around road issues across boundaries.
- Education – how best to conserve resources, why it's important
- How best to conserve resources, Tell success stories, use social media
- Utilize existing successful relationships with private landowners
- Utilize OSU extension
- Biochar partnerships – donate materials to make it pencil out
- Transportation from forest to farm, and staff to operate the burner is the economic limitation. Forest products are provided at no cost. (Added by Andrea)
- Marketing needs addressed
- Create a subsidy to reduce the cost and encourage the use similar to ethanol (added by Andrea)

Range

(Break out group requested to leave items from 2015 in 2016 notes.)

Noxious Weeds – More education and research needed

- Sulphur Cinquefoil – Forest Fringe
- Garlic Mustard – Riparian
- Medusa head Rye
- Ventenata
- Rush Skeleton Weed
- Blueweed (Viper's Bugloss)- Riparian/grass edges
- Multi-flora Rose-emerging?
- CTUIR Specific:
 - Yellowstar
 - Whitetop
 - Knapweed
 - Common Crupina

Resource Concerns

- Improve ecological conditions
- Forage Production
- Water quantity and storage
- Pollinator establishment

- Multiuse vs. single use on same lands.
 - Social Issues
- Multi species grazing eg: goats/sheep for hire
- Grazing of stubble/cover crops require more discussion

Wildlife Concerns

- Grazing timing and intensity
- Water quantity-spring developments
- Sage Grouse habitat improvements to draws.

Range Solutions

- Funding – grants, state/federal
- Education – schools, youth, community
- Research – multi-species grazing/use, livestock health
- Pollinator habitat establishment
 - Need more info/education on Bee's
- Partnerships
- Re-introduce fire and controlled burns
- Range and Pasture plantings
- Grazing practices
- Spray programs
- Use extension system more!

2016 Range Notes

Resource Concern	Solution
Insufficient water for livestock and wildlife	Spring Development/troughs/ponds w/ permits
Poor Water Quality	
Noxious Weeds, known infestations, expanding populations-priorities Common Crupina early detection, rapid response	Site specific on USFS currently tracking, CTUIR smaller population, private land base of the Blues north of Tollgate (private land piece added by Andrea)
Medusahead Rye	Waiting on soil bacteria development
Blueweed (Viper's Bugloss) Yellowstar Careful Consideration needed	Goat grazing on Meacham Creek, herbicide treatment potential in 2017.
Feral animals resulting in resource damage	CTUIR Roundup (added by Andrea)
Rush skeleton weed and others, lower elev., Milton Freewater area, Railroad/Hwy Dept, rock pits, wildlife transporting, roads/trails/vehicles dispersal.	Potential Coordination with Agencies and landowners BIA, RR, USFS, Tribes, Coordinating in Umatilla Co. A couple of proposals are active and pending
St. Johnswort on Forestland	Bio control Klamath beetle
Invasive species control program – burning Medusahead infestations – air quality concerns	Prescribed burning – smoke regulations make it difficult
Multiflora Rose	Found in deeper soil areas
Deteriorated Ecological Condition	
Rangeland Inventory completed in 2009-10 on the Reservation	On CTUIR, plan use or permit use to move long term ecological condition, rotational grazing, weed control,

CTUIR has inventory, monitoring, and utilization studies	livestock water to improve distribution, ensure grazing is adjusted to drought and climatic changes
Pollinator habitat needed on rangeland	Sanfoin (non-bloat legume) Aspen enclosures utilize state lists, tribe is cultivating plants to be re-planted, native species needed to support pollinators every season, spring, summer, and fall. East side plants needed.

Dryland Crops

Resource Concerns

- Cheat grass, Medusahead – questions about bacteria efficacy
- ID cheat grass cultivar – impacts treatment
- Post-Emergence Fertilizer Application Rates – influence on weeds from over application.
- Russian Thistle-efficacy of glyphosate and Spartan studied.
- Spartan potentially persists in soil
- Treatment timing issues with Russian thistle
- Reduced Tillage and Residue management – increased weed issues, pests, and disease
- Cover Crop – Water Issues; Grazing of cover crops and soil health needs further attention
- Effective Rotation – Spring barley, Spring Brassica Carinata
- High Residue Management with Vertical Tillage Equipment study effects on soil disturbance and soil health (added by Andrea as per Stewart Wuest study)
- Slug damage in canola and wheat (added by Andrea as per farmer concerns)
- Cover crop and biochar use in cropland (added by Andrea as per Machado study)

Solutions

- Grant Funding for on the ground research
- Communication – Improve connection between growers and research station
- Identify how do you connect to the usual suspects?
- Improve attendance at education or outreach events.
- OTG Research – Rotations – issues with profit (NONE) – invasive controls
- Communication – nine varieties of cheat grass exist – each require different treatments
- Education-Plan a seminar with Ian Burke and Judy Barroso
- Cost Effective solutions – Bottom line for producers

Next Steps

The next steps for NRCS will be to look at the identified resource concerns and develop conservation implementation strategies. These strategies will address resource concerns in specific geographic regions within Umatilla County using all available partnerships. Please know that NRCS will not be able to tackle all these resource concerns with our limited budget and local staff in 2017. We encourage participants to assist us in forming partnerships to leverage funding.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND INPUT!